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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Russia Versus the U.S. -
Dick Cheney's Remarks Hamas - Palestinian Aid UN Human
Rights Council
PARIS - Thursday, May 11, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Russia Versus the U.S. - Dick Cheney's Remarks
Hamas - Palestinian Aid
UN Human Rights Council

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The Clearstream scandal continues to attract the attention of all front pages, including that of the IHT. While Le Figaro and Les Echos underscore Chirac's attempts to "Douse the Fires of Rumors," Liberation devotes its lead to the man suspected of being the ("Crow") secret informant, and who temporarily stepped down from his EADS post in order to "devote his efforts to defending himself." La Croix's front page points to the "Six Key Issues" which explain the affair and which are analyzed inside. In Le Figaro John Vinocur pens an op-ed denouncing France's 'immobility' which he says "is the real scandal, not Clearstream: Concentrating on this scandal is distracting France from the fundamental causes of its misery."

Le Figaro's second lead story is devoted to Putin's "resistance against the American 'wolf'" in reference to Putin's national address yesterday in which he presented the U.S. as "Russia's rival." The editorial is entitled "Russia Sure of Itself." (See Part C) Le Figaro carries an op-ed penned by Secretary Rumsfeld entitled "Faced with the New Challenges, America's New Alliances" which addresses America's partnership with Russia: "The U.S. is in the midst of a significant transformation of its military positions and partnerships. NATO has been rethought. and while today we concentrate on Iraq and Afghanistan, in the coming years our priorities will change, in part due to choices made by other nations. Take Russia: our cooperation in security issues has never been better. But Russia is less cooperative in other matters, such as the energy sector. The same goes for China."

Liberation and Le Figaro report on the "serious situation in Gaza" (Liberation) and the "threat of a catastrophe" (Le Figaro) if financial aid does not resume. One report in Le Figaro notes the "divergence of views" between the U.S. and Europe. (See Part C)

The weekly column in Le Figaro by Alexandre Adler is devoted to the "coincidental fact that in France and the U.S. intelligence services, the CIA and the DGSE, are presently suffering from a lack of public trust. In the U.S., the head of the CIA was forced to step down; in France, the most renowned and prestigious intelligence officer, General Rondot, is on hot coals in the Clearstream scandal." Adler traces the creation of the new agency headed by John Negroponte, "a Tsar of intelligence," and analyzes the "growing number of Pentagon-led special operations which have absorbed all of the CIA's paramilitary sector, as in Iraq and Afghanistan." Adler also notes that "the nomination of Michael Hayden to head the CIA consecrates, at least symbolically, the subordination of the agency's operators to the technocrats."

Le Monde devotes its editorial to the UN Human Rights Council and the effects of "realpolitik." (See Part C)

Financial daily La Tribune devotes its lead to France's "economic attractiveness" for foreign investors. A graph in La Croix shows the U.S. as the number one investor in France and responsible for the creation of 29% of total jobs last year, up from 8,248 in 2004 to 8,756 in 2005.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Russia Versus the U.S. - Dick Cheney's Remarks

"Russia Sure of Itself"

Pierre Roussel in right-of-center Le Figaro (05/11): "Dick Cheney's fierce criticism of Russia has served Putin well. It allowed him to appear before his people in full control of the international situation. Putin can indeed feel secure: his popularity ratings are close to 70%, while President Bush's is down to 31%. Growing oil prices have finally given Russia the means to serve its ambitions. Cheney's attacks on his energy 'blackmail' had no effect on the master of the Kremlin. Putin knows that part of the American political class is pressuring Bush to adopt a harsher tone towards Moscow. In answer to Cheney's remarks, which were reminiscent of the Cold War, Putin preferred irony, calling America 'comrade wolf.' But the gist of Putin's speech lies elsewhere: in the defense of a stronger Russia economically and militarily. And so the question is: what attitude to adopt towards an increasingly strong Russia but one which is moving away from our democratic model? The debate is on between the U.S. and Europe. While both have made the same diagnosis, all will not follow Cheney in his confrontation with Moscow. We must convince Putin that a Russia sure of itself will be even stronger thanks to civil liberties and democracy."

"Putin Assails the American 'Fortress'"

Virginie Pironon in left-of-center Liberation (05/11): "The criticism is barely veiled and the cutting remarks wisely sprinkled in advance of the G8. Yesterday Putin could not resist the temptation of rebutting America's recent criticism made by Vice President Cheney as he accused Russia of trampling democracy and of using its energy resources for blackmail. For the master of the Kremlin faced with the 'fortress' erected by the U.S., Russia needs to assert itself as a military and economic power. Putin ended with a final barb aimed at the U.S. when he said that Russia's membership in the WTO should not be the subject of 'bartering.'"

"Putin for a Strong Russia"

Benjamin Quenelle in Catholic La Croix (05/11): "Although Putin did not directly address Dick Cheney's accusations, everyone in the audience had in mind the American Vice President's criticism of Russia's missteps with democracy. Putin in fact answered Washington's criticism, which Moscow interprets as a return to the Cold War, with relative disdain."

Hamas - Palestinian Aid

"A Minimal Agreement"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (05/11): "The European Union has been tasked with putting together the funds earmarked for the Palestinians and to be overseen by an international institution. Jacques Chirac's idea has been retained, albeit with modifications. But there is no assurance that the new system will allow payment of back salaries to government employees. The Americans remain reticent about subsidizing a public service which is managed by Hamas, a terrorist group which has yet to give up violence and recognize Israel. The Bush administration sees less reason for alarm than the Europeans when it comes to the developing crisis in the territories, and puts the onus on Hamas. The U.S. is pressuring banks to stop the transfer of 70 million dollars allocated by Arab nations. Says a European diplomat about the different analyses made by Washington and the EU: 'Our intent is not to make Hamas fail, but to lead it to change.' Meanwhile, 10 million dollars worth of medicine and medical equipment from the U.S. is on its way to the territories."

"The Quartet Wants to Avoid Chaos"

Left-of-center Liberation (05/11): "Faced with the projected humanitarian tragedy and the growing concerns that chaos is imminent in the territories, the West has made a few concessions. Secretary Rice announced that 10 million dollars worth in medical supplies would be allocated by Washington."

UN Human Rights Council

"Realpolitik at the UN"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (05/11): "China, Cuba and Saudi Arabia are among the 47 countries asked to make up the new UN Human Rights Council. This poses the question of the credibility of this new organization, which is a product of the reformed UN. The member states, France among them, seated on this Council will have to make a solemn oath to respect Human Rights and be open to regular inspections of the practices in their countries. Washington, which considered the reform to be too lax, is opposed and will not have a seat on the Council. In the case of this new council, realpolitik prevailed. And Cuba already sees it as a 'crushing victory' over the U.S."

STAPLETON